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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the criterion performance approach, a competency based teacher education program for special education majors in a small, rural church-related private college (Cumberland College in Kentucky). The program serves a relatively large student body with only a few instructors. Entrance requirements are listed as is a recommended sequence of courses for majors in learning and behavior disorders. Students are administered pretests and posttests with performance criteria established. Similarly, criteria for staying in the program are noted. A sample pre/post test in a course on educational assessment of exceptional children is followed by listings of course requirements and evaluation and by 15 performance objectives. (CL)

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PREPARING TEACHERS FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS IN A LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE: A CRITERION PERFORMANCE PREPARATION MODEL

by

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The Council for Basic Education has emphatically stated that "More than anything else, America's schools need competent teachers" (1981). In no area of American education is this statement more valid than in the field of special education. In view of the rapid growth of special education teacher education programs during the past quarter century, the foregoing statement seems to be particularly disturbing. If we are to justify the special nature of our support services, special education teacher education programs must produce teachers for the handicapped who are professionally competent. Professional competence should be manifest in intelligent behavior that promotes the use of appropriate technical and human skills.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Historically, teacher education has been the exclusive domain of state teacher colleges. Only more recently have private colleges ventured into this field. In the private sector, Catholic colleges and universities have provided

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the leadership for developing teacher education programs for handicapped learners. With the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142), more private colleges have established handicapped teacher education programs. This trend will very likely continue through the mid 1980s.

While the demand for new teachers in our elementary and secondary schools have been declining during the past fifteen years, the demand for special education teachers at all levels has been increasing (Chandler, 1981). A direct result of this demand for more special education teachers has been the development and expansion of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs in both public and private institutions.

Competency-Based Preparation Models

Competency-based teacher education (CBTE) or performanced-based teacher education (PBTE) is a relatively new movement that gained popularity, credibility, and momentum during the 1970s. The CBTE model, according to Hall and Jones (1976), evolved as a result of four separate and unrelated factors: (1) a teacher surplus, (2) a changing view of teacher education, (3) a public demand for accountability in the professional preparation of teachers, and (4) an increased commitment by federal and state agencies to research and development.

The concept underlying CBTE is competency. By definition, then, CBTE means mastering or reaching specific

criteria for success in courses established by the faculty in teacher education programs. More specifically, it implies that the prospective teacher will acquire a predetermined number of competencies germane to each course he/she is enrolled in. Failure on the part of the prospective teacher to acquire these competencies at a predetermined criterion level will identify him/her as less competent than someone who meets or exceeds the minimal criterion level. Hence, the deficiencies will need to be overcome before moving on to the next module of instruction or major curriculum component.

To be sure, CBTE is not without its critics. One of the major justifiable criticisms is the totally inadequate research base to support the contentions of CBTE design (Hall & Houston, 1981; Maple, 1983). At our present level of research sophistication, the writer believes that this criticism could be overcome in this decade. Perhaps a greater obstacle to the development, implementation and maintenance of CBTE programs in any Department of Education is the inordinate amount of work connected with this teacher preparation model.

In spite of the opposition to CBTE, it appears to be an expanding model that has permeated colleges of education and state departments of education. Most emerging changes in teacher certification requirements embrace some aspect of the competency-based movement (NCES, 1981; Standard, 1976).

The remainder of this manuscript will address a specific aspect of CBTE, the performance criterion approach to pre-

paring special education majors in a small, rural, church-related private college. The prospective special education teachers are being prepared to work with children who have mental, learning, and/or emotional disabilities.

THE CRITERION PERFORMANCE APPROACH

Teacher education in the field of special education has had only a very brief and undistinguished history. Two decades ago it was difficult to find prepared teachers for special education classrooms and even more difficult to hire adequately prepared teacher educators for this profession. The Kennedy-Johnson administration, together with the aid of some very capable and dynamic congressional leadership, provided the impetus for change through the passage of such significant pieces of federal legislation as PL 88-164, PL 89-105, PL 89-333, and PL 89-750 (Holmgren, 1968). With this legislation and commitment to change came an era of accountability.

It is difficult for most special education teachers to identify with a preparation model twenty-five years ago, because special education simply did not have a clearly identifiable teacher education model. It was closely patterned after the traditional teacher preparation model for regular classroom teachers. It was not until the late 1960s that special education began to assert itself as a viable professional preparation area within the educational establishment. The reasons for this professional metamorphosis were indicated above: they included the

commitment by the federal government to support teacher education programs for exceptional children and youth, and the need to hold teacher educators accountable for their products. These demands necessitated more vigorous recruitment efforts at all levels of teacher education preparation, more rigorous entrance and exit requirements, and the maintenance of strong viable preparation components.

A Small College Experiment

Cumberland College is a small private church-related liberal arts college in southeastern Kentucky. It has an enrollment of approximately 1700 students with over forty percent of them majoring in some area of teacher education. Approximately one-fourth of the undergraduate majors in Special Education are pursuing certification in learning and behavioral disorders (L & BD). The Special Education program employs two part-time master's level teachers, one in learning disabilities and one in the TMH area. The college recently initiated an MA degree program in Education with an opportunity for the graduate student to concentrate in one of four areas: Early Childhood, Elementary, Reading, and Special Education. The Graduate Program in Special Education employs one full-time doctoral level person who also teaches part-time in the undergraduate program.

Entrance requirements. Students intending to enter the field of special education are encouraged to declare this major at some point during their sophomore year. Minimum requirements for admission to the special education teacher

education program include: (1) passing tests designed to measure skills in basic literacy, oral and written communication, reading, writing, and computational skills, (2) satisfactory completion of a basic concepts course in education, (3) have a grade point average of 2.25 on a 4.0 scale, (4) exhibit moral, social and ethical behavior commensurate with the standards embraced by the school and community, and (5) make formal application to the Teacher Education Committee and schedule a formal interview with this group. Final admission to the Teacher Education program is determined by the Teacher Education Committee which also acts as the Admissions Committee. Subsequent to being formally admitted to the Teacher Education program, the student pursues his/her major course work under the direction of the major advisor. Figure 1 illustrates the formal teacher preparation process at the college.

Course sequence. In order for special education majors to maximize their learning and performance opportunities, they are advised to take courses in the sequence illustrated in Table I. The most compelling reason for advising the prospective teacher to follow the outlined sequence is so they can utilize prior knowledge and skills that are considered prerequisites to the subsequent courses. An example of this rationale is to have all students take SED 233, Survey of Special Education, as their first course because it provides a broad overview to all exceptionalities, a philosophy of special education support services, and the premise

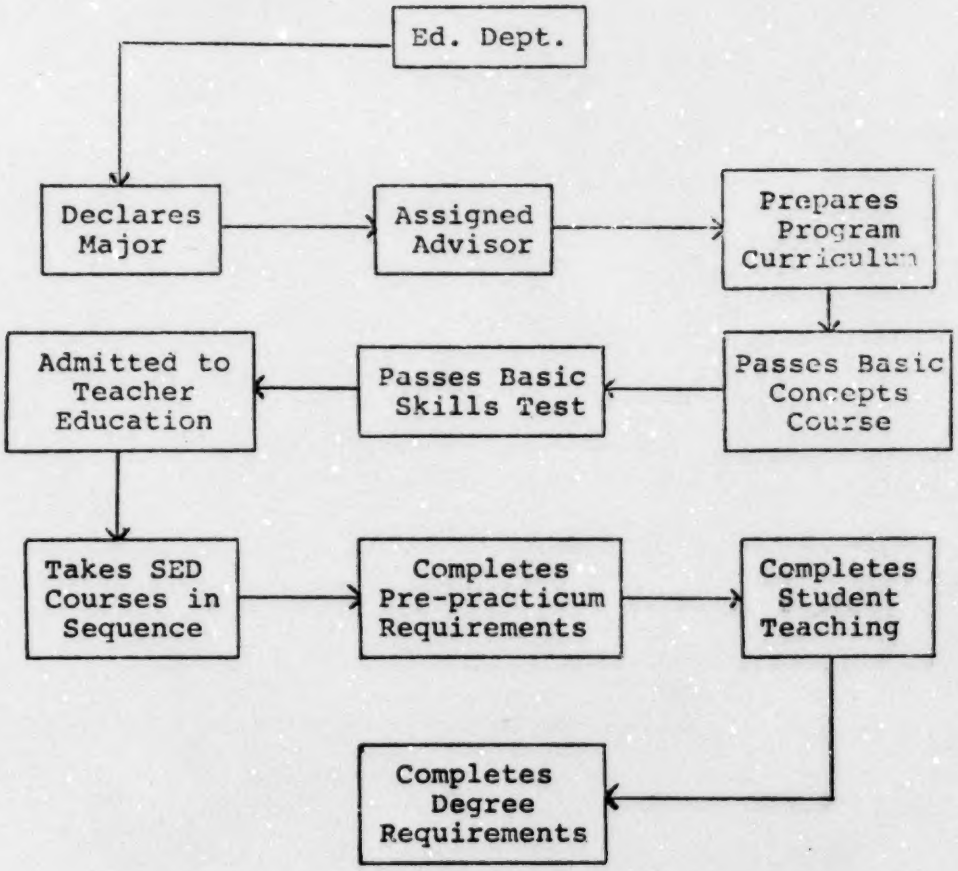

Figure 1. Flow chart of Special Education Teacher Education Degree Process

for mainstreaming exceptional children. This course provides the requisite knowledge and experiences for entrance into SED 330, Field Experiences, and the other Special Education courses that follow.

Performance criteria. Each student enrolled in the writer's courses is administered a pretest of knowledge regarding the content of the course during the first class session. An example of pretest items is presented in Table II. The pretest also is used as a post-test and is admin-

TABLE I

COURSE SEQUENCE FOR L & BD MAJORS

SED 233.	Survey of Special Education
SED 330.	Field Experiences
SED 341.	Special Education Instructional Programs
SED 342.	Special Education Early Childhood Programs
SED 344.	Career Education for Exceptional Children
SED 432.	Educational Assessment of Exceptional Children
SED 433.	Prescriptive Programming
SED 445.	Special Education Methods and Materials
SED 499.	Supervised Student Teaching: Exceptional Children

istered on the last day of the term, preceding the final examination. Every student is expected to get seventy percent (70%) of the items correct on the post-test exercise. His/her performance on this activity is compared with performance or other assignments and activities during the semester. An overall performance criterion level of eighty percent (80%) proficiency is required in the course in order to advance to the next sequence. For example, students not attaining this proficiency level in SED 432, Educational Assessment of Exceptional Children, would either take this course over again or make up the deficiencies before being advised to enroll in SED 433, Prescriptive Programming for Learning and Behavioral Disorders. An example of course requirements and evaluation components is presented in

TABLE II

PRE/POST TEST FOR SED 432

___ Mental measurements yearbook	A. Validity
___ Assessment data in graphic form	B. Criterion Reference Test
___ Establishing the assessment relationship	C. Formal Assessment
___ Assessment of social acceptance	D. Buros
___ Measuring what it is designed to measure	E. Profile
___ Measures the individual's mastery of a specific skill	F. Measure of Central Tendency
___ The use of standardized norm-referenced tests	G. Modalities
___ Scores that indicate the mean, mode, and median	H. Vineland Social Maturity Scale
___ The pathways of learning	I. Sociogram
___ A device designed to assess adaptability	J. Rapport
___ A comprehensive individual intelligence test for children	K. SIT
___ A learning aptitude test	L. Readiness Checklist
___ An informal assessment device	M. PPVT
___ A receptive vocabulary test	N. Detroit
___ An individual achievement test	O. PIAT
	P. WISC-R
	Q. Metropolitan Achievement Tests

Table III. Table IV presents an example of performance activities and the minimal criterion for determining competence. The tables clearly indicate that ample opportunities are provided for the students to acquire knowledge and skills essential to successful teaching. The writer believes that

TABLE III

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION FOR SED 432

Activities	Evaluation*
Examination of five assessment instruments	10%
Test Review	15%
Test Demonstration	10%
Problem Exam	15%
Completed Protocol Sheet and Profile Sheet	5%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
	100%

*Each activity is evaluated as a percent of 100. Letter grades are assigned as follows:

A 100 - 91
B 90 - 81
C 80 - 71
D 70 - 61
F 60 - Below

prospective teachers who follow the suggested course sequence and acquire the requisite knowledge and competencies under at least the minimal performance criterion will be adequately ready to engage in a successful student teaching practicum experience. The preceding approach should help to reduce the chance factors in producing competent teachers for children and youth who exhibit mild learning and behavioral disorders.

Retention procedures. The minimum requirements for retention for students in the special education teacher education program include satisfactory completion of course work,

TABLE IV

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES FOR SED 432*

1. Ability to differentiate between norm and criterion-referenced testing procedures.
2. Knowledge regarding the psychometric properties of a standardized test.
3. Knowledge regarding measures of central tendency.
4. Ability to interpret normative data.
5. Ability to outline and follow systematic procedures in conducting an educational assessment.
6. Ability to identify and discuss factors that affect a child's school performance.
7. Ability to specify procedures for conducting a task analysis.
8. Ability to identify standardized tests commonly used in the assessment of cognitive abilities.
9. Knowledge of early childhood development.
10. Knowledge regarding which psychoeducational instruments to use in assessing a preschool handicapped child.
11. Ability to identify formal and informal procedures for assessing reading skill development.
12. Ability to qualify and quantify a specific learning and/or behavior problem.
13. Knowledge regarding criteria and regulations for placing handicapped children in special education programs.
14. Ability to assess and diagrose learning problems in the basic school subjects.
15. Ability to profile psychometric data accurately.

*Minimal performance criterion is 80% mastery of the above items as determined by instructor observation, demonstrations, paper and pencil tests, performance tasks and check sheets.

while maintaining a grade point average (GPA) of 2.50. The student must also have had a minimum of 100 clock hours of clinical and field experiences relative to handicapped learners, excluding student teaching. In addition, the prospective teacher must have demonstrated good moral, social, and ethical behavior while in attendance at the college.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the foregoing discussion the writer has attempted to briefly review the rapid growth of special education teacher education preparation programs at all levels in both public and private colleges. The accelerated growth of these programs generated a need for developing more rigorous performance criteria in producing a competent teacher for handicapped learners. The writer recognizes that there are other viable approaches to teacher preparation for special educators. However, in a small college with one or two staff members, a large teacher education student enrollment and limited resources, great care must be taken to ensure quality instruction which will enable the prospective teacher to reach maximum competence in terms of his/her potential. For a more definitive discussion regarding variables affecting the quality of special education teacher education programs, the reader is referred to a recent article by Wheatley, Shuster and Schilit (1983).

During the past decade the writer has become convinced that the profession is producing and retaining more competent special education teachers. He does not agree,

however, with the notion recently posited by Gallegos and Gibson (1982) that self-selection seems to be weeding out the poorer students in teacher education programs. Special education teacher education programs will continue to attract an inordinately high percentage of prospective teachers with marginal aptitude because of its blighted professional image. Yes, what America's schools need more than anything else is competent teachers, special education notwithstanding.

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